



## Chronic Diseases

### Healthy Living and Faith-Based Organizations

Virtually all religions see good health as a God-given gift that should be protected to ensure both human and societal development. In Christianity, the human body is a “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19-20) that should be cared for out of reverence for God. In Islam, health is seen as the greatest blessing after faith itself, and every Muslim has the duty to safeguard that blessing. In Hinduism, essential practices such as morning baths, Yoga, and vegetarianism promote hygiene and health.

Faith-based organizations can help people live longer, healthier, and more fulfilling lives by encouraging behaviors that can prevent illness and premature death due to chronic noncommunicable diseases such as heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, and cancer.

Caribbean Heads of Government, in response to the heavy burden of noncommunicable diseases on the citizens of the region, issued the Port of Spain Declaration in September 2007, “Uniting to Stop the Epidemic of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases,” and declared that the second Saturday in September should be celebrated each year as Caribbean Wellness Day.

We invite you to join us on **September 12** and help support this initiative.

#### What you can do:

- Encourage faith leaders to observe September as Wellness Month. Organize activities that promote healthy eating and active living.
- In messages, publications and education in September, focus on healthy eating, active living, no tobacco and staying on treatment
- Advocate for tobacco control and smoke free public spaces.
- Arrange for group walks or aerobics after worship services. (Encourage members to bring walking or tennis shoes.)
- Offer exercise classes for congregation and community members.
- Adopt or develop walking trails in the community
- Organize healthy cooking demonstrations.
- Offer confidential screening for congregation members and their families for blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure, and weight.
- Encourage members to get regular check-ups and to take their medication as prescribed.
- Teach and promote primary prevention of chronic diseases.
- Offer training in disease self-management.
- Organize health clubs / support groups